

### In This Issue...

#### **Theme: Media Literacy Research** **02**

*Research that provides evidence of the effectiveness of media literacy education is so important, and yet can be so difficult to find. In this issue, we review the literature in the field, and we offer research and resources to contextualize the issues that need to be addressed to move the field forward.*

#### **Research Highlights** **04**

*We interview three prominent researchers to understand the importance of considering the needs and interests of participants in media literacy research. In our second article, we summarize the findings of a comprehensive review of the literature in the field.*

#### **CML News** **09**

*The May issue of The Russian-American Education Forum: An Online Journal features an article on global media literacy by CML's Tessa Jolls.*

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*To easily review the current state of media literacy research, we provide an overview of the Fairfield University Media Literacy Research Symposium, convened in March, with the AMLA Media Literacy Research Summit of 2007. In addition, we interview veteran media literacy researcher Kathleen Tyner (revised 6/30/2014), and we provide a list of recommended sources.*

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*In this production-oriented activity, your middle level students will conceptualize and master the visual language of the popular new Cosmos series to address issues of planetary concern.*

## Theme: Media Literacy Research

On June 17th, select members of the Aspen Institute Task Force on Learning and the Internet held a webinar to discuss recommendations articulated in their recently released report, *Learner at the Center of a Networked World*. In one sense, the task force simply encouraged a process that has been underway for some time--the individualization of online learning, made possible by access to online educational resources at any time, any place, at any pace. Essentially, the task force was created to recommend ways to mobilize for-profit and non-profit entities, government and educational institutions to meet the needs of the individual learner.

The Task Force had five major recommendations and action steps:

1. Learners need to be at the center of new learning networks
2. Every student should have access to learning networks
3. Learning networks need to be interoperable
4. All learners should have the literacies necessary to utilize media as well as safeguard themselves in the digital age
5. Students should have safe and trusted environments for learning

The task force sought to place the full complement of 21st century literacies at the service of individual learners: "We believe that learners and educators need a sufficient degree of digital age literacy, where media, digital and social-emotional literacies are present, to be able to use these learning resources to learn through multiple media confidently, effectively and safely." (p.17). The task force highlighted the importance of social and emotional literacies with research from the Internet Safety Technical Task Force of 2008, which found that the psychosocial makeup of children, along with their home and school environments, were better predictors of online risk than any technology children use (71). The task force makes its policy agenda clear with its insistence that social and technology literacies are inextricably intertwined: "Because so much of today's media is distributed digitally and is highly interactive or social, the literacies described above are becoming virtually inseparable" (68).

The Aspen Institute task force's approach to digital literacies helps to illuminate the importance of media literacy research in a 21st century society. Media literacy research shouldn't be approached as a sort of intellectual fillip (What if we added media as a hook for program X? Wouldn't that be a novel idea?) Rather, a media literacy research agenda should test the veracity of the task force's revolutionary claims. Can media literacy curricula help students increase their conceptual knowledge and skills? Do the same curricula actually help students develop skills which they can use to safeguard their social, psychological and even physical well-being?

If the two articles evaluating CML's *Beyond Blame: [Challenging Violence in the Media](#)* are any indication, the answer is in the direction of the affirmative. The first study, published in the [Journal of Children and Media](#), found that students who participated in the program were more

likely than students in a control group to understand the core concepts and key questions of media literacy. In a second study conducted at least six months after the intervention, and published in [Injury Prevention](#), control group students reported increased aggressive behaviors, including pushing, shoving and threats of physical violence, while students in the intervention group showed no increases in aggressive behavior. This result is notable given that current research predicts large increases in aggression in students at this grade level as they age.

Aside from calibrating the aims of media literacy research, defining and standardizing knowledge and skills for measurement is the most important step in building a body of evidence about the effectiveness of media literacy. Currently, most research studies designed to assess the media literacy of participants are fairly idiosyncratic in their selection of skills and knowledge to be measured. For example, researchers concerned about media exposure will use the amount of time participants spend viewing television or using media as a measure of media literacy. Others will assess participants' understanding of the persuasive intent of advertising. Or they will attempt to measure participants' knowledge of production techniques. Still others will provide a specific definition of critical thinking skills with regard to evaluation of media messages, and design an instrument to measure those. When research projects are not measuring the same thing (usually called the "dependent variable,"), there's no way of reliably comparing the efficacy of one media literacy program with another.

In this issue of *Connections*, we approach the topic of media literacy research from a number of perspectives. In our research section, we make use of selections from our interviews with three prominent media literacy researchers--Marilyn Cohen at the University of Washington and Erica Austin and Bruce Pinkleton at Washington State University--to highlight the importance of considering the development, needs and interests of children and youth who serve as subjects of media literacy research. We also preview an article which provides a critical review of media literacy research over the last 30 to 40 years. In our resources section, we trace historical developments in media literacy research with information on the Media Literacy Research Summit of 2007 and the Fairfield University Media Literacy Research Symposium convened this March. In addition, we interview veteran media literacy researcher Kathleen Tyner, who succinctly appraises the value of existing media literacy research, as well as the kinds of research she believes can move the field forward. In the production-oriented MediaLit Moment for this issue, your students will learn how to use visual techniques deployed in the new *Cosmos* series to comment on issues of planetary significance.

## Research Highlights

### The Importance of Audiences to Media Literacy Research

Marilyn Cohen, who has made many contributions to media literacy research over the last two decades through her work at the University of Washington, remembers the time when audiences had not yet crystallized as the focus of her research: "I was working on writing curriculum, and separately from that, I was doing some research around audiences, including some focus group work. These were specific, individual projects, but they led me to ask, how could I go about designing a completely different way of going into curriculum development? That led to some early efforts with teachers, by looking at their approach to curricula which had already been written. I re-designed it around their needs after what they had tried. That was successful to a point, but it wasn't really getting to the design issue that I wanted to address. And that led me to thinking more broadly--what if I knew much more about the audience? I have my area of expertise, and I know how to write curriculum, but what I don't know is, who is the audience? Where are they?"

By now Cohen has made deep shifts in her approach to research: "Where children are today is not necessarily where they were 3 or 5 years ago, because the technology is changing. And all children are changing all the time. For the field that we're in, audience is a critical component of what we do. Why not do that in curricular design?" It's that focus on audiences which may have assured the success of the organization which Cohen directs, the Northwest Center for Excellence in Media Literacy, which offers a wide variety of services and materials, from curricular packages and subject-specific websites to training, consulting and (of course) audience research.

Cohen, who has specialized in projects and curricula which combine media and health literacies, affirms that knowledge of the 'test' population is essential to the success of health intervention curricula: "Students have heard many times that tobacco is not good. Another area I've done research in is teen pregnancy and prevention of sexually transmitted infections. Kids know about these things. They know how a baby is made. What changes the way they look at these issues so that, how to protect themselves and how to make decisions becomes the focus? What do they want to know? How can we get them to think about the body of health knowledge and think about it in a different way and personalize it? With that idea in mind, we've been able to create different self-standing curricular materials that have been designed to accomplish particular objectives."

Over the last ten to fifteen years, Cohen has also partnered with Erica Austin and Bruce Pinkleton, faculty at the Edward R. Murrow School of Communication at Washington State University who have performed quantitative analyses of curricula designed by Cohen and her team--sometimes as pilot studies conducted before curricula are actually finalized. In interviews with both Austin and Pinkleton, the importance of audiences was a dominant theme as well.

Austin reflects: "The things that produce the most valuable data are often the hardest, and require lots of patience and determination. A lot of studies out there now focus on undergraduate students. But maybe what you want to know about is 3rd graders. It's a lot easier to get access to undergraduate students, but ultimately we really have to work with those third graders. Designing research requires that you keep the perspective of the participants in mind. What is the 3rd grader's experience? Their experience is way different from mine when they're trying to understand media. What are they using it for? What are they noticing? What are they not noticing? If I ask them questions based on my understanding of the world, I'm not getting at the most important things. Studying cognitive and social development is essential for the study of media literacy. Development happens during an entire lifespan, not just when we're little."

Even surveys need to be designed with the needs of audiences in mind. Austin cautions, "You have to be careful about bias when you're asking questions. . .It's really easy to ask people, are you more or less likely to think advertisers are lying to you? But if you phrase the question that way, you're assuming-- and privileging--the lying end of the spectrum. To what extent do advertisers tell the truth or lie? That gives the other side of the equation. Maybe they could be telling the truth. One kind of question I've seen a lot on surveys that gives an idea of what I'm talking about has to do with smoking and drugs. Frequently respondents will see questions phrased, How wrong is it to do something--- very, somewhat, or not wrong? But what if you have a respondent who thinks it's right? A lot of people think smoking marijuana is perfectly right. You're not giving respondents room to state their own opinions if you ask the questions that way."

Bruce Pinkleton had much to say about the responses of teen audiences to health communication campaigns: "Alcohol marketing and tobacco commercials are created to be persuasive. Research shows that children are exposed to them at a stunning rate. It's quite remarkable. Of course alcohol ads succeed. They're funny, they're hilarious, they're colorful, they have animals, and they draw in sex. They're really well-rated messages that appeal to young people. So what is the context for youth for understanding ads and making decisions? When you talk to young people, they clearly understand that, if you open a bottle of beer, you're not going to have the Swedish bikini team parachute onto your private beach, but that doesn't mean that an ad like that isn't going to have appeal. They're positive, effective messages. They can short-circuit logically-based decisions."

"It's not that young people aren't using logical reasoning, but they can use different logic than you or I do. How did you make decisions when you were thirteen? How you made decisions made sense to you based on what you were trying to accomplish. Did you want to impress a young woman to get her attention? Well, maybe you put yourself in harm's way. It's not that young people are illogical, but that their logic works in a different way. For young people, their frontal cortex is not fully formed until their mid-20s--and that's the area most responsible for motivation, logic and decision making. There's a lot of room for play there. . .The challenge is to help activate their logic in the service of healthy decision making. That's not just true of

media literacy but of any health communication programming directed to young people. I did one study of beer advertising and anti-drinking public service announcements. The beer ads were exciting; they had color, humor, and sex. The anti-drinking PSA's were completely well-intended--they're doing the best they can--but they're dour, they're sad. They show crying parents. They're gripping, but the emotion is usually a negative emotion. It makes total sense that they don't attract a lot of attention, and that young people don't see them as interesting or informative. It's incumbent upon us to understand young people, and to create messages that resonate with them. We need to create media literacy programs that appeal to their decision making."

### **Media Literacy Research: The State of the Field**

Locating a good summary of the current status of media literacy research proved to be a difficult task--one made much lighter by a call to Robert Kubey at Rutgers University, one of the media literacy pioneers interviewed for the [Voices of Media Literacy](#) project and the editor of *Media Literacy in the Information Age: Current Perspectives* (Transaction Books, 1997/2001).

Though it's been published as a 2013 encyclopedia entry, "Boom or Boomerang: A Critical Review of Evidence Documenting Media Literacy Efficacy," by Kubey and lead author Smita C. Banerjee, provides an overview of research which is both comprehensive and thorough. The essay reviews research on media literacy programs (usually called "interventions") on a wide variety of topics including sexual objectification in advertising, media violence, tobacco and alcohol prevention, body image and advertising awareness; and it reaches back to some of the earliest forays in the field, such as the studies conducted by Rowell Huesmann in the early 1980s to evaluate media literacy as a strategy for mitigating violent media effects.

While the entry has much to say on the problems and limitations of media literacy research, it notes the favorable results from studies of media literacy interventions for smoking prevention (p.3), and the results of interventions for alcohol prevention programs which show increased media skepticism and dampened expectancies (anticipation of future behavior) for drinking (p.4-5). And it discusses interventions which helped to increase children's critical attitudes towards media violence, some of which served to reduce aggressive behaviors as well (p.5-6).

The essay also demonstrates why fine distinctions matter in evaluating the effectiveness of media literacy programs. For example, in one study of a program designed to enhance body image, researchers found that the program did not increase awareness of socio-cultural ideals of attractiveness; and yet other researchers found that media literacy programs which specifically challenge the realism of media had the potential to reduce internalization of those ideals (p.6-7).

Similarly, the essay introduces readers to problems stemming from the need to definitively document the connection between skills children gain from media literacy programs and

reduction of the negative impacts of media. For example, a number of advertising awareness programs have shown that media literacy programs help elementary and middle school students identify and understand the persuasive intent behind advertising; and yet other researchers point out that little evidence has been produced to show that advertising awareness programs can effectively counteract the impact of advertising on children of any age (p.7-8).

The news which may be disconcerting to some is that media literacy studies can yield negative results, or even 'boomerang' outcomes. For example, one comparative study of programs for reducing the risk of eating disorders found that a media literacy intervention which dealt with stereotyping, advertising, pressures from media and media activism demonstrated no statistical improvements across the points for assessment (p. 15). And in one intervention, which presented a video about ethnic stereotypes in media and asked participants to analyze stereotypical and counter-stereotypical news stories, researchers found that the media literacy video appeared to *increase* prejudicial responses, compared to a control video (ibid).

Of course, researchers were left to ask many questions about the likely causes for that result. Banerjee and Kubey suggest that the didactic nature of the video, and the lack of interaction between participants, might have led participants to negatively react to the perceived "preachiness" of the intervention. In any case, the authors point out that the modalities for interventions matter, and that "ample research demonstrates that actively engaging audiences in prevention interventions is a more effective strategy than passive reception" (13).

And, to return to a theme introduced in the research article for this issue, the authors are concerned about the lack of research on the cognitive processes of the subjects--the audiences--for media literacy research. In fact, the authors display a good measure of eloquence: ". . . previous evaluations of media literacy intervention programs assessed changes in attitudes and/or behaviors without providing explanations of why and how the participants change attitudes and/or behaviors when exposed to these programs. Such interventions limit the outcome measures to knowledge or behavior. It is important to explain why and how change occurs to fully understand the role of the intervention. What kind of cognitive processes do the program participants engage in that causes them to change their attitudes, norms, and subsequent behavior? Relatedly, in many instances, attitude change does not lead to behavior change. To understand how an intervention produces long-term change in attitude, which further results in changed behavior, it is important to understand the learning process" (11).

This review is a valuable resource, not only because it delivers a comprehensive review of research relevant to media literacy educators, but also for its reference and "further reading" section, which provide valuable information for anyone interested in learning more about the field.

Citation:

Banerjee, S.C., & Kubey, R. (2013). "Boom or boomerang: A critical review of evidence documenting media literacy efficacy." In Valdivia, A.N., Ed., *The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies* Vol. 5 Media Effects/Media Psychology, Scharrer, E., Ed. Article 32. Chichester, UK: Blackwell.

Blackwell has made this article freely available online. It can be accessed at:

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems994/pdf>



CML Director Tessa Jolls recently authored an article for *The Russian-American Forum: An Online Journal* titled “The Global Media Literacy Imperative.”

**ABSTRACT.** *The increasing demand for human capital world wide has ignited a trend towards the globalization of education. As nations compete to improve their standing on international assessments that focus primarily on students’ acquisition of content knowledge, we must ask: are these assessments truly measuring what’s important to citizens and their countries? Media literacy skills are central to contextualizing, acquiring and applying content knowledge -- it is these skills that are imperative for being an educated and competent citizen in the 21st century.*

Find the [article here](#).

### **CONSORTIUM for MEDIA LITERACY**

*Uniting for Development*

#### **About Us...**

The Consortium for Media Literacy addresses the role of global media through the advocacy, research and design of media literacy education for youth, educators and parents.

The Consortium focuses on K-12 grade youth and their parents and communities. The research efforts include nutrition and health education, body image/sexuality, safety and responsibility in media by consumers and creators of products. The Consortium is building a body of research, interventions and communication that demonstrate scientifically that media literacy is an effective intervention strategy in addressing critical issues for youth.

<http://consortiumformedia literacy.org>

## Resources for Media Literacy

### Two Conferences in Seven Years, and Eras Apart

In 2006, Marilyn Cohen chaired a group of board members of the Alliance for a Media Literate America to organize a media literacy research summit to be scheduled in tandem with the 2007 biannual AMLA conference in Saint Louis. The group began its work by launching a massive talent search for researchers representing the field in universities and colleges across the United States. And the group sought out scholars who might not be readily found. As Cohen recalls, "Not everyone used the term media literacy, but many people in their own various fields were doing work which was very applicable, though they had never heard the term media literacy education. All of them were looking at media influence in some part of their research. How could we reach out to them? We wanted to engage them in a conversation as well, and get them engaged in presenting data, to help all of us who were interested in gathering a body of research. . . We got a really great response from people around the country, and even the world. They had all kinds of ideas . . . They all were wanting to share in a research environment with peers, people who could actually give feedback and offer suggestions. They hadn't found that peer group in other kinds of conferences, and now they could attend a conference that specifically focused on issues exactly like or very similar to theirs, and they would have an audience where everyone was eager to be part of the conversation. "

The conversations launched at the 2007 Research Summit itself were both rigorous and relevant. Plenaries included "Questions Guiding Media Literacy Research," "Measures of Attitudes, Behavioral Intent, Normative Beliefs, and Behaviors," "Measures of Knowledge, Critical Thinking, and Understanding," "Measures of Media Production Skills," and "Research Designs and Models." Cohen remarks, "How can we get to meaningful measures of effectiveness? These were very critical topics for educators." No fewer than eleven breakout sessions were offered, with three to four presentations per session. Sessions ranged from "Media Education and Health" to "Issues of Diversity" to "Teaching and Teacher Education" and "International Perspectives."

In an interview with CML, media literacy educator and scholar Belinha De Abreu explained the inspirations behind the Fairfield University Research Symposium which took place in March of this year: "In our most recent book, *Media Literacy Education in Action*, Paul Mihailidis and I really wanted to frame how media literacy education is coming from different vantage points. Sections were devoted to global perspectives, K-12 education, civic education, participatory culture. In the year before we initiated the search for contributors to the book, we were noticing that media literacy was being mentioned at a lot of different conferences--it was coming from the Internet safety people, from the FCC, from educators, from college and university faculty, from people at the MacArthur digital media and learning events."

"So when the book was completed, Paul and I put together a conference for more discussion on the topic to foster the opening of a doorway to media literacy research. . . We ended up

attracting a bigger audience than we were expecting. We had 32 presentations. The symposium was a really interesting opportunity for people to discuss where their research exists while at the same time opening doors for graduate students, including some who came from outside the U.S. It was a chance to find out where they were finding work, and information about jobs. Higher education faculty in journalism, communications, and history attended. We had many different conversations. And the excitement built on itself--the conference generated a fervor for bringing about more conversations like this in the media literacy community."

Though conference attendees came from a wide variety of fields and approaches, some devoted significant attention to social sciences research methods in their projects. One assessed the outcomes of a peer-to-peer mentoring program designed to help at-risk youth become critical consumers, creators and disseminators of health media. A study utilizing survey data and field research investigated undergraduate students' preferred methods of communication and learning. Another aimed to generate baseline data on the question of whether the information literacy of "digital natives" included anything more than basic instrumental competencies. And CML offered a presentation on peer-reviewed evaluations of *Beyond Blame: Challenging Violence in the Media*.

One of the perennial questions of media literacy research is, what are the skills, understandings, and outcomes that we want to measure? Several presentations addressed definitions for media literacy. One ambitious presentation, delivered by Julie Frechette (Worcester State University) and colleagues, offered a framework of necessary skills and competencies for engaging as citizens of the digital world at all levels--self, social, local, national, and global.

The attention given to different threads of the media literacy movement--and especially the desire to trace the strands of its 'genealogy'-- clearly demarcates the differences between the two conferences and their eras. Presenters continued to weave and re-weave these skeins at the symposium. A sampling includes a presentation by Michael RobbGrieco (University of Rhode Island) on the trajectory of Elizabeth Thoman's (CML Founder) *Media and Values* magazine; a presentation by Bournemouth University professor Julian McDougall's presentation on the 'incomplete project' of media literacy in and out of formal educational institutions; and a presentation by Elizaveta Friesem (Temple University) and Russian media literacy scholar Alexander Federov on the contribution of Soviet 'cineclubs' to media literacy education from the 1950s to the 1970s.

Finally, we would draw attention to some of the innovations described in presentations by practitioners in the field, most notably The LAMP's Chocolate Project workshop from last year. This workshop took a page from the field of Cultural Studies by focusing on particular institutions and cultural practices and using the results of inquiry to make larger observations on society as a whole. It's a welcome translation of investigative practice from academia to the production classroom.

The program for the AMLA 2007 Research Summit may be accessed at:

<http://name.net/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/AMLA-Research-Summit-Program-6-2007.pdf>

The program for the Fairfield University Media Literacy Research Symposium is accessible at:

<http://medialiteracyresearchsymposium.wordpress.com/>

### **Interview with Kathleen Tyner, University of Texas, Austin (revised 6/30/2014)**

*Note: this is a corrected version of the interview published online in Connections June 27, 2014.*

Kathleen Tyner is an associate professor in the Department of Radio-Television-Film at the University of Texas, Austin. She teaches courses in new media literacy, children and media, video games, virtual worlds, and research methods. She has significant experience in the research, evaluation and development of new media, media arts youth media and STEM projects and programs. She is an editorial board member for several publications, including the *International Journal of Learning and Media*. Her books include *Literacy in a Digital World: Teaching and Learning in the Age of Information* (1998), *Visions/Revisions: Moving Forward with Media Literacy* (2003) and *Media Literacy: New Agendas in Communication* (2010).

CML: How would you characterize the progress of research in the field of media literacy?

KT: There are a lot of gaps, and I would say that's because of problems with the definitions, and the complexity of media literacy. It's just so complicated, like literacy is complicated, right? You cannot study it as a whole thing, but in parts. As a result there are gaps. A lot of the research is anecdotal. A lot of it is qualitative. So using more mixed methods can be helpful to build the theory--and we really need more theoretical foundations. A lot of work in the media literacy field has come from an advocacy stance, which is fine, but key concepts have to be revisited to see whether they resonate now, with other kinds of technologies. It's a fine framework to study, but it's not the only one. The theory is more coherent around media effects. After that the theories have been less tested. Some theories come out of ICT, some from media literacy, some from theories of social capital.

Some in youth media call production media literacy. But what are we measuring? Cognitive work? Production work? Some of the biggest gaps lie in the difficulty of reconciling production analysis and actual hands-on work with cognitive skills for analysis. I don't see a lot of good theory for that. Education is often more applied. Media and communications studies are more theoretical. It's not unusual in academia to have this complexity. It would be more diligent to use mixed methods for intervention or impact studies. Another thing that I think we could use is a shared database for them, so that they would be easier to field test. Right now the literature is too isolated, too difficult to put together.

Evaluation is different from research, though it's very, very useful. You can measure impact, though even that is controversial. You can't prove anything, but that's true of all research.

You're just investigating, probing ideas. You can't prove anything with one study. It has to go forward step by step by step.

Studies of media effects have received a ton of government funding, much of it following the theories of George Gerbner. With video games, the results are mixed about the effects of violent media. What about approaching it from a cognitive psychology viewpoint? Media effects scholars believe that the theories have been replicated for reliability and validity. But questions remain: Do effects depend on the medium? Should we try to study it by medium? What are some other variables? There are many more questions.

Cognitive psychology still provides a strong theoretical basis for psychological research about media. Now researchers are coming from different approaches. When educators come together, they come from different theoretical bases. The great majority of the media effects theorists believe that violence is bad. What kind of violence? With what audiences? I think that kids are already aware of their media use, and I think they negotiate some of the same tradeoffs that everyone else makes so that they can be online. They know that Facebook collects personal data. There are other uses of media that we can investigate. Kids are aware of algorithms--but nonetheless, kids should be aware of the tradeoffs, and we can't assure that children still don't know this stuff. Some don't, so we need to make sure that they get a foundation for it. But then what?

CML: Do you think there are any milestone publications in this area of research?

KT: I think that the studies produced by Sonia Livingstone (in the UK) are some of the richest in the field. In the United States, scholars like James Gee, Henry Jenkins and James Potter take different approaches to the study of media literacy. Here in the U.S. we need more quantitative research in general. There's been a lot of advocacy, but, generally speaking, we need more rigorous research. Livingstone's work provides a pretty good foundation. Media literacy is very interdisciplinary. A lot more rigorous work comes out of the health field, but the health field doesn't always resonate with the people in cultural studies. There's a little bit of a disconnect. Interdisciplinary theoretical positions are now common throughout academia, so mixed research methods--one would hope--can provide better foundations for future research. They give more reliability of results, and they can help with future research questions and hypotheses, and theories. We don't want to have grandiose expectations about results. If we think we have a valid, reliable study, that can help shape research questions, hypotheses, and the theory base, and that's what's important for academics.

I will say that with evaluative research, you can create innovative data collection instruments, and then you can modify data collection instruments that have been field tested, and you can refine them over time. Doing that is useful for building data--baseline data, all kinds of data. Whether the results of that field testing are great or not doesn't matter. Because evaluation studies take place on a smaller scale, it's a place for innovation, not only in methodology, but in research questions. Evaluation is where a lot of the research innovation takes place.

## Recommended Sources

Austin, E.W., & Knaus, C. (2000). Predicting the potential for risky behavior among those "too young" to drink as the result of appealing advertising. *Journal of Health Communication, 5*(1), 13-27.

In the critical review of media literacy studies summarized in this issue, the authors assert that few, if any studies attempt to document the learning process of students. They do, however, point to the Message Interpretation Process model theorized by Erica Austin and her colleagues. The MIP is a decision-making theory and specifically targets individuals' interpretations of mediated messages.

Austin, E.W., Chen, Y., Pinkleton, B.E., & Johnson, J.Q. (2006). Benefits and costs of Channel One in a middle school setting and the role of media-literacy training. *Pediatrics, 117* (3), 423-433.

This article presents an example of one of the more novel uses of media literacy research. Members of a school community in the Northwest were divided in their opinions about the value of including Channel One television programming as part of instruction in the school. Some valued the public affairs programming, while some decried the intrusion of commercial advertising into a public school environment (Each episode contains 10 minutes of programming and 2 minutes of commercials). Austin and her colleagues studied the possibility of using media literacy curricula to help students become more aware of the purposes of Channel One. Compared to control group students, students who received the curriculum did increase their media literacy skills--but they still displayed interest in the products featured in Channel One advertising.

Hobbs, R., & Frost, R. (2003). Measuring the acquisition of media-literacy skills. *Reading Research Quarterly, 38* (3), 330-355.

This is a good example of the type of media literacy study mentioned in our theme article which utilizes the core concepts, uses classroom assessments as a measure of skills, and subjects the findings to statistical analysis.

Lisosky, J.M. (2007, June). *Part of the solution: A four-year study of a media and violence curriculum in Seattle public schools*. Paper presented at the Alliance for a Media Literate America Research Summit, Saint Louis, MO.

This evaluative study of a media violence curriculum created by Marilyn Cohen and her colleagues at the Northwest Center for Media Literacy Excellence gives readers a valuable introduction to qualitative methods in media literacy research.

Pinkleton, B.E., Austin, E.W., & Fujioka, Y. (2001). The relationship of perceived beer ad and PSA quality to high school students' alcohol-related beliefs and behaviors. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media 45* (4), 575-597.

This article demonstrates student preferences for commercial advertisements, and the relatively slight impact of typical anti-drinking PSA's.

Pinkleton, B.E., Austin, E.W., Cohen, M., Chen, Y., & Fitzgerald, E. (2008). Effects of a peer-led media literacy curriculum on adolescents' knowledge and attitudes towards sexual behavior and media portrayals of sex. *Health Communication, 23* (5), 462-472.

This is an example of one of the productive collaborations between Cohen's group at the Northwest Center for Media Literacy Excellence at the University of Washington and Bruce

Pinkleton and other communications faculty at Washington State University.

Primack, B.A., Douglas, E.L., Land, S.R., Miller, E., & Fine, M.J. (2014). Comparison of media literacy and usual education to prevent tobacco use: A cluster-randomized trial. *Journal of School Health, 84* (2), 106-115.

This randomized trial included a sample of nearly 1,200 students in 64 classrooms. Based on research conducted in 2012, this study found that students who participated in a media literacy intervention (vs. students who were taught a standard curriculum) developed greater media literacy skills than the control group with regard to messages about smoking; and intervention students exhibited a greater reduction in the perceived prevalence of smoking around them. As part of the study, researchers administered a survey to all students which measured their likelihood (or 'susceptibility') of tobacco use. Among students initially susceptible to smoking, intervention students more commonly reverted to being non-susceptible post-intervention. The randomized assignment of students lends a measure of credibility to the study which few other media literacy studies can match.

Primack, B.A., Gold, M.A., Switzer, G.E., Hobbs, R., Land, S.R., & Fine, M.J. (2006). Development and validation of a smoking media literacy scale for adolescents. *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, 160* (4), 369-374.

This article provides a window onto the relationship between education and health sciences. It fully details the process by which media literacy concepts can be translated into a survey instrument which assesses the media literacy skills of respondents.

## MediaLit Moments

### Keep Your Comments Brief and Planet-Sized

Most science and media literacy activities are based on news stories, which are rich fields for questions about the agendas of scientific researchers, and the agendas of media producers. But what about science as entertainment? The recent re-boot of the classic science television series *Cosmos* uses many eye-catching media techniques to inform, to inspire wonder, and occasionally to persuade. What would it be like to speak not just the language of science, but to speak the visual language of this series? In this MediaLit Moment, your middle level students will learn how to conceptualize and use these techniques to inform, to persuade, and to provide audience opportunities for perspective taking.

*Ask students to create a storyboard or produce a visual that uses perspective or scale to reinforce the purpose of their media message*

**AHA!** With a show like *Cosmos*, it's the use of scale and perspective that really grabs my attention!

**Grade Level:** 6-9

**Key Question #2:** What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?

**Core Concept #2:** Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.

**Key Question #2 for Producers:** Does my message reflect understanding in format, creativity and technology?

**Key Question #5:** Why is this message being sent?

**Core Concept #5:** Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power

**Key Question #5 for Producers:** Have I communicated my purpose effectively?

**Materials:** Computer with high speed internet access, LCD projector and screen. OR DVD player and television.

**Activity:** Engage students in a conversation about the new *Cosmos* series. Have they seen it? Did they like it? If they did, what did they like about it? What really grabbed their attention? Depending on your schedule (and depending on whether you teach science or some other subject), screen the entire *Cosmos* episode 12, "The Worlds Set Free," about global warming. Single episodes are available to stream on Amazon and other platforms for about \$2. A DVD of the entire series would require an investment of about \$50. Alternatively, screen clips. In any case, find sequences which illustrate the problems of or solutions to global warming; for example, the cliffs of Dover rising to illustrate the world's increasing carbon output, or a massive wind farm in the ocean illustrating wind power as an alternative energy source.

Screen these sequences at least a couple of times. Ask students, what kinds of visual techniques were used? How are they different from the kinds of visuals presented in other TV series? You may want to discuss KQ#2 with students. You may need to introduce the concepts of scale and perspective. Also ask, for what purpose were these techniques used? Direct students' attention to KQ#5.

Next, ask students to write a comment about global warming. They can comment on problems, or solutions. They may also write a comment intended to help audiences comprehend the planetary scale of the issue. Students can use their comments as the basis for creating a storyboard - a visual sequence which reinforces their ideas. Direct the attention of students to KQ#2 for Producers and KQ#5 for Producers. If media production tools are available in your school, so much the better. If students are allowed to bring their own device to school, this may provide an avenue for production as well. Make production feedback available in whatever format is desired--individual, online, group, whole-class, etc.

**Extended Activity:** You may wish to screen the sequence of deGrasse Tyson's commentary on the change of perspective brought by images of Earth sent back from Apollo lunar missions.

The Five Core Concepts and Five Key Questions of media literacy were developed as part of the Center for Media Literacy's MediaLit Kit™ and Questions/TIPS (Q/TIPS)™ framework. Used with permission, ©2002-2014, Center for Media Literacy, <http://www.medialit.com>